

REMARKS

Claims 1-24, 26 and 27 are pending in the application.

Claims 2-12, 14-23, 26 and 27 have been objected to.

Claims 1 and 13 have been rejected.

Claims 13, 17, 23 and 27 have been amended.

Claim 17 has been canceled. Claim 28 has been added.

Appreciation is expressed for the indicated allowability of Claim 24, and the indicated allowability of Claims 2-12, 14-23, 26 and 27, if amended to remove dependencies upon a rejected claim. At this time, Applicants decline to amend the claims, but reserve the right to do so at a later time.

Unless otherwise specified in the below discussion, Applicants have amended the above-referenced amended claims in order to provide clarity or to correct informalities in the claims or to correct claim dependencies. Applicants further submit that, unless discussed below, these amendments are not intended to narrow the scope of the claims. Applicants have also canceled a claim in order to clarify the issues for prosecution. By these amendments and cancellation, Applicants do not concede that the cited art is prior to any invention now or previously claimed. Applicants further reserve the right to pursue the original versions of the claims in the future, for example, in a continuing application.

Rejection of Claims Under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Claims 1 and 13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 5,419,717 issued to Abendschein et al. (“Abendschein”). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Independent Claim 1 contains limitations of substantially the following form:

- an optical connector interface coupled to said third I/O port and configured to couple an optical network connector to a mounting surface, and couple said optical network connector to said first I/O port; and
- an electrical connector interface coupled to said third I/O port and configured to couple an electrical network connector to said mounting surface, and couple the electrical network connector to said second I/O port, wherein said optical connector interface and said electrical connector interface are vertically aligned with one another with respect to said mounting surface.

See, e.g., Claim 1. Applicants respectfully submit that Abendschein fails to provide disclosure of these claim limitations.

The Office Action provides a copy of Figure 2 of Abendschein with suggested associations between Abendschein’s illustrated components and the claim terms. Applicants note that for the claimed “optical network connector” and “optical connector interface,” the Office Action indicates the same illustrated component to serve for both claim elements (39). Similarly, the Office Action indicates one illustrated component to serve for both the claimed “electrical network connector” and “electrical connector interface” (45).

Applicants respectfully submit that such merging of claim elements ignores the clear distinction drawn between a connector and a connector interface, either optical or electrical, presented in the claims. The claimed “optical connector interface” couples the “optical network connector” to a mounting surface and couples the “optical network

connector” to a first I/O port. By merging these claim elements into one illustrated element, the Office Action has ignored the claimed distinction and functionality of the separate elements. For example, the claim requires that the “optical connector interface” couple the “optical network connector” to a mounting surface and to a first I/O port. If the two elements are the same structure, then one cannot serve to couple the other to a mounting surface or an I/O port, as claimed. The Office Action similarly ignores the claimed distinction between the “electrical connector interface” and “electrical network connector.” Claims cannot be construed in such a manner as to vitiate the meaning of a claim term or limitation. *See, e.g., Ericsson, Inc. v. Harris Corp.*, 352 F.3d 1369 (Fed. Cir. 2003); *cf. Warner-Jenkinson Co. v. Hilton Davis Chem. Co.*, 520 U.S. 17, 39 n.8 (1997).

Further, the claims require that the optical connector interface and the electrical connector interface be “vertically aligned with one another with respect to said mounting surface.” However, the Office Action labels two different structures in Abendschein Fig. 2 as corresponding to the claimed “mounting surface.” *See* Office Action, Attachment (Elements 10 and an unlabeled element to which Elements 11-13 appear to be attached). The Office Action appears to use both labeled structures with regard to two separate areas of the claims, even though the claims require the use of only one mounting surface. In addition, given the Office Action’s association of the illustrated structures with the claim terms, it is not clear how the Office Action’s combined “optical connector interface” couples the “optical network connector” to the labeled “mounting surface” (element 10) or the “mounting surface” (no element). Likewise, with the “electrical connector interface” and the “electrical network connector.”

For at least these reasons, Applicants submit that Abendschein does not disclose all the claim limitations of independent Claim 1, and all claims depending therefrom, and

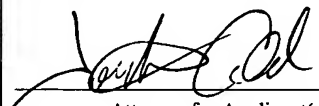
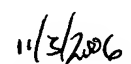
that they are in condition for allowance. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner's reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections as to these claims and an indication of the allowability of same.

Applicants have amended independent Claim 13 to incorporate the limitation of previously allowed dependent Claim 17. Applicants therefore respectfully submit that independent Claim 13, and all claims depending therefrom, are now in condition for allowance.

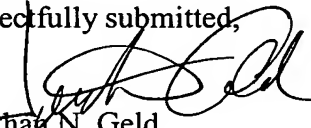
Applicants have added dependent Claim 28, which contains limitations that Applicants submit are further distinguished from the cited art.

CONCLUSION

In view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein, the application and the claims therein are believed to be in condition for allowance without any further examination and a notice to that effect is solicited. Nonetheless, should any issues remain that might be subject to resolution through a telephonic interview, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at 512-439-5090.

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as First Class Mail in an envelope addressed to: Mail Stop Amendment, COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS, P. O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on November 3, 2006.	
	
Attorney for Applicant(s)	Date of Signature

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